

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1 1. (currently amended) A method of making a hardened
2 steel part of complex shape from a workpiece, the method comprising
3 the step of sequentially:

4 a) heating the workpiece to an annealing temperature;
5 b) while the workpiece is still at the annealing
6 temperature, rapidly deforming the workpiece with a machine into an
7 intermediate shape;
8 c) moving the deformed workpiece from the machine to a
9 press while maintaining it at the annealing temperature; and
10 d) while the workpiece is still at the annealing
11 temperature, deforming the workpiece in the press to the complex
12 shape and then holding the workpiece in the press until the
13 temperature of the workpiece drops below the annealing temperature
14 to harden [[it]] the workpiece.

1 2. (original) The method defined in claim 1, comprising
2 the step of
3 minimizing contact in step b) between a deforming tool
4 and the workpiece to reduce cooling of the workpiece.

1 3. (original) The method defined in claim 1 wherein in
2 step b) the workpiece is deformed by engagement with a heated tool
3 of the machine.

1 4. (original) The method defined in claim 1, further
2 comprising the step of
3 b') heating the workpiece during step c).

5. (canceled)

1 6. (currently amended) The method defined in claim
2 [[5]] 1 wherein the workpiece is heated in step b') by blowing hot
3 gas on it.

1 7. (currently amended) The method defined in claim [[5]]
2 1 wherein the workpiece is heated in step b') by radiating heat on
3 it.

1 8. (original) The method defined in claim 1, further
2 comprising the step of
3 surrounding the workpiece during steps a) through d) with
4 an atmosphere of inert gas.

1 9. (original) The method defined in claim 1, further
2 comprising before step a), the step of
3 applying a coating of a protective metal to the
4 workpiece.

1 10. (new) The method defined in claim 1 wherein the
2 annealing temperature is the AC₃ temperature of steel.